(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that supply of cereals through PDS will help to enhance nutrition security; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARD PAWAR): (a) and (b) The National Commission on Farmers in it's Fourth Report have viewed that the Public Distribution System (PDS) can also be encouraged to store and sell nutritious millets with appropriate price support to the farmers.

(c) and (d) Most coarse-grains have high nutrient values. The Government procures them from the farmers at a Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Government every year to avoid distress sale. The Government is allocating coarse-grains *viz.* Maize, Jowar, Bajra and Ragi to the States as and when demanded by them under PDS. During Khariff Marketing Season (KMS) 2005-06 a quantity of 2,51,520 MTs was allocated to the States.

Import of Wheat from Australia

1214. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of wheat imported from Australia during the year 1998 and the expenditure incurred thereon;

(b) whether it is a fact that Australian Wheat Board has recently confirmed payment of Rs 11.25 crores into a Cayman Island Account as commission for a 1998 wheat import contract to India and if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have since conducted any enquiry in this regard and if so, the names of the persons found involved in the receipt of commission; and

(d) the action Government have taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) During 1998-99 (FY), a quantity of 14,14,369 MT wheat was imported from Australia at an expenditure of Rs. 100601.26 lakh.

(b) to (d) In course of its inquiry into the allegations of irregularities in import of wheat from Australian Wheat Board the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had sent Letter Rogatory to the Australian Government for information regarding payment of US$ 2.5 millions (Rs. 11.25 crores) into a Cayman Island Account. As the Australian Authorities did not furnish required information, the CBI closed its inquiry in the year 2004. However on fresh media reports, the CBI has written to the Indian High Commissioner that if the Australian Authorities are ready to cooperate even at this belated stage and furnish necessary evidence, the CBI would promptly examine reopening of the investigation and take the matter to its logical conclusion.

Shortage of sugar in PDS

1215. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is shortage of sugar in the Public Distribution System as well as in the open market;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the status of sugar stock in the country during the last three years, State-wise; and

(d) the efforts made by Government to overcome the shortage of sugar?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) There is no shortage of non-levy (free sale) sugar in the country. However, it has not been possible to supply levy sugar as per the levy quota to each State/UT as the levy obligation on sugar factories has been reduced to 10% with effect from 1.3.2002. A statement showing state-wise stocks of sugar, as on 31st July in each of the last three sugar seasons (October-September) is enclosed as Statement.